



**Office of the United States Attorney
District of Arizona**

PRESS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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PHOENIX MAN SENTENCED TO PRISON FOR CHARGE OF FELON IN POSSESSION OF A FIREARM

PHOENIX – Paul K. Charlton, U.S. Attorney for the District of Arizona, and Lester D. Martz, Special Agent in Charge for the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives, announced that Lionel Mendez, 29, of Phoenix, was sentenced on March 14, 2005 to 57 months in prison, followed by three years of supervised release, by U.S. District Judge James A. Teilborg. Mendez pleaded guilty on October 13, 2004 to a charge of Felon in Possession of a Firearm in violation of Title 18, U.S. Code, Sections 922(g)(1) and 924(a)(2).

On December 21, 2003, Phoenix Police detectives stopped Mendez in a high crime area because his vehicle had no license plate. During a records check on the vehicle's registration, detectives asked Mendez about a tattoo on his hand that appeared to be gang related. Mendez told the detectives that he was a member of the Latin Kings gang in Illinois and had left the gang in good standing. Mendez also volunteered that he had spent eight years in the Illinois State Department of Corrections for a weapons violation. The detectives then asked Mendez if there were any weapons in the car. Mendez eventually told the detectives there was a gun in a hidden compartment of the driver's side door handle. The detectives ascertained that Mendez had previously been convicted of Aggravated Discharge of a Firearm in Kane County, Ill. During a search of the car incident to arrest, detectives found a Raven, model P25, .25 caliber handgun inside the driver's door handle.

The investigation in this case was conducted by ATF and the Phoenix Police Department. The prosecution was handled by Bill C. Solomon, Special Assistant U.S. Attorney, District of Arizona, Phoenix.

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